



## IN THE MATTER

OF

### H. R. BILL 2187, "TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY AND NATIONAL PARK UPON THE PALISADES OF THE HUDSON."

*To the Committee on Military Affairs of the*

*House of Representatives of the United States:*

WE, the undersigned, citizens of the United States, respectfully represent to your Committee:

I. We are intensely interested in the preservation of the scenic beauties of the Palisades of the Hudson, and in arresting the deplorable defacement thereof now going on, and we have given much time and thought to the questions involved therein. Our interest arises as to some of us from our ownership of land upon, near or opposite to the Palisades. As to all, it arises from our desire to preserve the great natural beauties of the Hudson River in all its parts.

II. We seriously apprehend that the Commissioners of the States of New York and New Jersey who have framed and had introduced House Bill 2187, are endangering the accomplishment of what it is feasible to do toward saving the Palisades from permanent defacement in their effort to accomplish too much. A great National Park, including both the plateau on the top and the slope below the Palisades, would be of great advantage to all residing in New York City and its vicinity, and such a park could be made of service in saving the scenery of the Palisades. But it is easy to understand that Congress will be reluctant to make or incur large expenditures in order to establish a National Park within a few miles of New York City merely for these reasons. It is only fair, therefore, that we should not conceal from your Committee our conviction that the cost of such a park would be many times the amount of the appropriation proposed by House Bill 2187. We assume that the fair value of the land would be paid to its present owners, and that no intention of spoliation is embodied in the scheme of the State Commissioners. Now, the property proposed to be taken upon the plateau of the Palisades embraces a strip of land nearly twelve miles long and of an estimated average width of 900 feet, and this includes more than 1,000 acres of land. At the average price at which this land lying between the front or edge of the Palisades and the Boulevard upon the plateau has changed hands during the last twenty years, its acquisition as bare land would cost certainly from \$2,000,000 to \$2,500,000. To this should be added at least \$500,000 as the cost of the buildings and improvements made by those residing upon portions of this land. ~~The land to be taken below the~~ Palisades we estimate at about 800 acres additional, and this land, we estimate, would cost from \$350,000 to \$400,000. Again, to make a park of this land it would be necessary to reduce the rough, rocky forest, full of depressions or swamps, by clearing, grading, blasting and draining. The expense of this would be enormous, and would eventually add largely to the original cost. If your Committee should consider that this narrow strip of land might be desirable for military manœuvres, then we apprehend that a still larger expense must be estimated, since few locations could be found more difficult to fit for such purposes. We have never supposed, however, that anyone seriously entertained the idea that the United States wanted to make any military or naval use of the Palisades of the Hudson, and we have, therefore, candidly stated our belief as to this matter, in order that your Committee may decide intelligently as to the proposition of the State Commissioners, and not be misled upon the question of cost. Unless, therefore, your Committee is prepared to approve the acquisition of the Palisade plateau as a National Park at an expense greatly larger than \$500,000, then we apprehend that the pendency of this Bill as it stands serves only to delay other efforts to save the Palisades, for no one else will move in the matter so long as Congress is entertaining the scheme proposed by this Bill, and this situation is a source of great anxiety to us all.

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III. In our judgment, however, the present defacement is caused solely from the quarrying operations carried on at the base of the Palisades, upon the strip of land between the edge of the cliffs and the Hudson River. No danger threatens the scenic beauty of the Palisades from any other source than these quarrying operations. Also, in our judgment, this quarrying can be forever stopped and all this abominable defacement of scenery permanently prevented by the acquisition, either by the United States or by the States of New Jersey and New York, of the strip of land lying between the foot of the Palisades and the Hudson River. This strip of land is, as has been said, about twelve miles in length, and is of a width varying from three hundred to one thousand feet, and includes about eight hundred acres of land on the Hudson River, all within six miles of the city limits of New York City. There is reason to suppose that this strip of water-front lands could be acquired for the price before estimated by us; say, between \$350,000 and \$400,000. If it lies within the power and policy of the United States to acquire this property, we should rejoice to have this done, and to have a public driveway laid out thereon for use and enjoyment as a National Park. Otherwise, we shall hope that the States of New Jersey and New York, or their public-spirited citizens of wealth, will undertake this desirable work.

IV. We therefore respectfully ask your Committee, if it be not disposed to act favorably upon the Bill, to consider the propriety of so amending the same as to provide merely for the acquisition of the land between the Palisades and the Hudson River and the laying out of a public driveway thereon.

Or, that your Committee, if it does not approve the Bill even when thus amended, then by at once reporting the Bill adversely, shall leave the State Commissioners, and others anxious to preserve the scenic beauty of the Palisades, free to devise such action by the States of New Jersey and New York, or by individual citizens, as shall most effectually accomplish that purpose.

March 10, 1896.

